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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[11.](#) Mideast

[12.](#) Gaza Crisis

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that yesterday three IDF soldiers were killed in the fighting in Gaza.

Media reported that the diplomatic-security cabinet will decide this

morning whether to expand the IDF's ground operation and send reservists to Gaza, or agree to the cease-fire. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli sources as saying that no cease-fire resolution would be acceptable unless it ensured the establishment of a mechanism to prevent a resumption of arms smuggling into Gaza through tunnels under the Philadelphi Corridor from Egypt. The media reported that Amos Gilad's mission to Cairo was unproductive, as Hamas rejected Egypt's cease-fire proposal. Major media reported that Egypt is not prepared to admit forces on its side of the Gaza border. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials as saying that they did not see the end of the Bush administration's time in office as a deadline for the military campaign in Gaza.

Israel Radio reported that last night the UN Security Council passed a resolution urging an "immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire," and for Israel to withdraw from Gaza after a 14-day air and ground offensive. The U.S. abstained from the vote. Israel Radio reported that Israel's Ambassador Gabriela Shalev told the Council: The responsibility for the current hostilities lies squarely with Hamas. The radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying that Washington backed the text and had abstained only because it wanted to see the results of an Egyptian mediation effort. The radio noted that Hamas's name was not mentioned in the resolution. Yediot said that the world pushed for the resolution, and that the U.S. yielded. Israel Radio quoted Hamas as saying that it is not a partner to the resolution since it was not consulted.

HaQaretz reported that the High Court of Justice is scheduled to review today a petition from eight Israeli human rights groups who asked the court to order the IDF to vouch for the safety of medical teams in Gaza and allow injured people to be evacuated to medical facilities. The Red Cross, meanwhile, has accused Israel of delaying ambulance access to the Gaza Strip, and demanded it grant safe access for Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances to return to evacuate more wounded without being fired on by Israeli soldiers. Maariv cited UNWRA's claim that Israel has shelled an assistance convoy. The Jerusalem Post reported that there is confusion over who fired and who helped.

Maariv highlighted President Shimon Peres' role in the mediating efforts.

Leading media reported that Lebanese PM Fouad Siniora condemned the rocket attacks on Israel from his country yesterday, and announced that an investigation has been launched into the incident, as tensions heightened on the northern border.

The Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who is scheduled to visit Israel for high-level talks Sunday, was quoted as saying in an interview with HaQaretz: "NATO has never had a discussion about deploying forces to Gaza; NATO is not a party to the Middle East Peace Process." Scheffer was quoted as saying that the prospect of Israel's membership in NATO is virtually impossible.

HaQaretz and other media reported that Attorney Nurit Elstein, the Knesset's legal adviser, ruled yesterday that a special majority of 80 of 120 Knesset members is required in order to postpone the Knesset elections.

HaQaretz and Maariv reported that the presumptive secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, will put Dennis Ross in charge of the Iranian nuclear crisis.

HaQaretz cited an internal report drafted by IDF Intelligence that shows that intelligence assessments on the eve of disengagement were written to please the government.

Khader Nour Al Din, member of the political council of Hizbullah, was quoted as saying in an interview with the Arabic-language newspaper Kull Al-Arab that Nasrallah is confident that the victory of Hamas would be a victory for the nation but that its failure, God forbid, would be the end of the Palestinian cause. Abu Mujahid, spokesman of the Popular Resistance Committees, was quoted as saying in an interview with Kull Al-Arab that the enemy soldiers have not moved one meter within the Gaza Strip and see only missiles and rocket but not the fighters on ground.

Maariv presented the results of a TNS/Teleseker poll on voting intentions for the Knesset elections:

In brackets: Maariv's January 1 poll):

Likud 29 (28); Kadima: 27 (28); Labor Party: 17 (16): Yisrael Beiteinu: 13 (12); Shas: 9 (11); Arab parties: 10 (10); United Torah Judaism: 6 (5); Meretz: 5 (6); National-Religious Party-Jewish Home 4 (4)//.

OEleven days ago the IDF started the fight against Hamas in order to stop rocket fire against Israel. Do you approve or are you opposed to this operation?

Approve: 91.4%; opposed: 3.8%; 4.8% are undecided.

QThe Knesset elections are set for February 10, 12009. In light of the fighting in Gaza, do you favor postponing them or holding them on the scheduled date?

Postpone the elections: 48.6%; keep the scheduled date: 41%; 10.4% are undecided.

¶1. Mideast:

Summary:

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QThe influence of the President-elect has been reflected in the behavior of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is trying to achieve a legacy of balance -- demonstrating a clear show of compassion for Muslims -- as distinct from the overall legacy of her president, George W. Bush.

Block Quotes:

"The Best-Laid Plans"

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/9): QIsrael has wasted its days of grace and is approaching the start of the Obama administration. The influence of the President-elect has been reflected in the behavior of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is trying to achieve a legacy of balance -- demonstrating a clear show of compassion for Muslims -- as distinct from the overall legacy of her president, George W. Bush. Rice's liaison to the next administration is her friend retired Gen. James Jones, her security envoy to the region. He rejected her attempts to have him assigned as her deputy, but has agreed to serve as Obama's national security adviser. In Bush's final two weeks, the voice being heard is that of Rice, the hands are those of Jones, and the policy is already being coordinated with Obama. Time is not on Israel's side.

¶2. Gaza Crisis:

Summary:

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QA decision to reject [the Egyptian-French-American compromise] may, instead of causing the collapse of Hamas rule in Gaza, bring about the crash of Abbas' rule in the West Bank. And that will, by extension, destroy the Roadmap.

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe motivation [of Condoleezza Rice] these days to take a dip in the dirty waters of the Middle East, to put it lightly, is not particularly high.

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Ha'aretz: QAnyone who justifies this war also justifies all of its crimes. Anyone who sees it as a defensive war must bear the moral responsibility for its consequences.

Editor-in-Chief David Horovitz wrote on page one of the

conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: QIf Hamas remains intransigent over the weekend, signs are that a reluctant political echelon will order a reluctant IDF leadership to send a confident and well-trained ground force of many thousands to confront Hamas's fighters as never before.

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QIt was Ehud Olmert who sent the airplanes, but Mubarak who took the muck.

Block Quotes:

II. "No End sans Hamas"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/9): QAt midnight Friday, according to Hamas's interpretation of the Palestinian constitution, the tenure of Mahmoud Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority comes to an end. The confrontation in the Gaza Strip has granted Israel the opportunity to decide whether Abbas will lose his legitimacy before some of his nation, or will secure continued Fatah rule in the West Bank. The decision to adopt the Egyptian-French-American compromise may bring an end to the fighting in the Strip and create the conditions for the resumption of the peace process. A decision to reject it may, instead of causing the collapse of Hamas rule in Gaza, bring about the crash of Abbas' rule in the West Bank. And that will, by extension, destroy the Roadmap.... Incorporating the PA in the running of the crossings would retain Gaza as an inalienable part of the Palestinian situation. Since its election victory three years ago, it turns out that including Hamas in Palestinian government is a necessary condition to solving the problem.

II. Condoleezza's Memoirs

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/9): QAlready in the first week of Operation Cast Lead, the State Department began the process of searching for a mechanism to end the Israeli military operation. A draft of an American document, which made its way to Israel already at the end of last week, tried to tackle the issue of supervising Philadelphi Road. The draft spoke of American involvement in the area to a much greater degree than at present and with strict supervision from Washington in implementing the agreements.... Defense Minister Ehud Barak fully embraced the American plan. However, while Rice was writing the document with her right hand, her left hand was busy writing the memoirs of her golden days at the White House. In other words, her motivation these days to take a dip in the dirty waters of the Middle East, to put it lightly, is not particularly high. At first the Americans tried to pass their plan for a cease-fire through a conference of the Arab League. That turned out to be a bad joke. The Egyptian were not willing to play the role which the Americans had designated for them on the issue of smuggling. They oppose a high profile American presence on their side of the Philadelphi Road -- a matter of national prestige and protecting their sovereignty. And no less important: so not to anger the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The American plan evaporated. The mediating ball fell back into the Egyptian court. Sarkozy added a European touch to the American initiative and nearly stole the show away from the Egyptians. As of now the French-Egyptian proposal is the only one on the table. But the Americans have not completely disappeared. They have simply forfeited the lead and are staying backstage.

III. "The Time of the Righteous"

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Ha'aretz (1/9): QThis war, perhaps more than its predecessors, is exposing the true deep veins of Israeli society.... The unbridled aggression and brutality are justified as exercising caution: the frightening balance of blood -- about 100 Palestinian dead for every Israeli killed, isn't raising any questions, as if we've decided that their blood is worth one hundred times less than ours, in acknowledgement of our inherent racism.... Anyone who justifies this war also justifies all of its crimes. Anyone who sees it as a defensive war must bear the moral responsibility for its consequences. Anyone who now encourages the politicians and the army to continue will also have to bear the mark

of Cain that will be branded on his forehead after the war. All those who support the war also support the horror.

IV. "Time Is Running out for an Escalation Israels Leaders Dont Really Want"

Editor-in-Chief David Horovitz wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (1/9): Of Hamas remains intransigent over the weekend, signs are that a reluctant political echelon will order a reluctant IDF leadership to send a confident and well-trained ground force of many thousands to confront Hamas's fighters as never before. Israel would do so knowing that the international window of opportunity is narrowing, that the UN Security Council is getting impatient, and that anything resembling Tuesday's shelling of an UNRWA school that causes heavy civilian casualties would be terminal. Beyond that phase would lie a full-scale invasion to overthrow Hamas and reoccupy the Gaza Strip, involving the participation of many tens of thousands of reservists.

This was emphatically not a declared goal of Operation Cast Lead, not least because there is no clarity whatsoever as to how the ensuing vacuum could or would be filled.

IV. The Guardian of Israel

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/9): Those who followed the debates around the [Gaza] operation were certainly exposed to a strange development: It was Ehud Olmert who sent the airplanes, but Mubarak who took the muck. If Hamas survives the bloody cycle, Cairo will be the big loser among all partners who handled the Israeli operation.... For Arab governments, the successes of Hamas and Hezbollah in holding on in confrontations with strong regular armies are particularly significant in strategic terms.... Resistance will remain unvanquished.

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